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# DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE  
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY  
AT HOME & ABROAD



## CONTENTS

DECEMBER, MCMXXXVI

SPECIAL  
LEAGUE NUMBER

INCLUDING  
FULL REPORT OF THE  
LIVERPOOL CONFERENCE.

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# DRAMA

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THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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## PLAYS OF THE MONTH

By C. B. Purdom

HAVING flirted with Restoration Comedy to the distress of some of its supporters, the Old Vic returned to its first love in Shakespeare's "As You Like It," though with a difference, for it put the play in the eighteenth century in France, and treated it as elegant pastoral comedy. Such excessive deference to innocence we may regard as excusable after what preceded it on this chaste stage. Shakespeare himself provided the excuse, for he tells us that we are in France where the enchanted forest of Arden is also to be found.

I do not think I have ever seen a more satisfactory production of the play—except that I did not like Miss Molly Macarthur's settings. But I am understating what I felt. It was the most consistently charming and at the same time intelligent production of the play I remember. Much of this was due to Edith Evan's Rosalind, so well poised, so rich in romance, so delightfully spoken, so natural and yet so full of art, that I was never tired of watching her. This performance I shall never forget; it was, I thought, a model for all Rosalinds, not that Miss Evans's mannerisms need to be imitated—how well she employs them!—but that her absorption, directed by intellect, is an example of that clear intensity that makes acting significant. Miss Evans never does anything cheaply; all she does she lifts above its commonplace level and makes noble. In the part of this young girl, written for a boy to perform, she did not exploit the obvious qualities of sex, which so many Rosalinds depend upon, but presented the qualities of grace, exalted by fine feeling, that make the part a song of innocent love, love in the forest, love free from convention,

love that does what it pleases, and gets what it deserves. Miss Evans sang her words as all great actors do, for they make speech golden. Michael Redgrave made Orlando an excellent foil to Miss Evans; in her hands he was the helpless lover, as a lover should be! In my ear he echoes Mr. Ralph Richardson, which I do not regard as a fault in a young actor. I praise this production by Esme Church.

From romance to realism in "The Children's Hour" by Lillian Hellman at the Gate Theatre Studio. The piece has more than a little crudity, but its dramatic content is unmistakable and redeems it from unpleasantness. The theme itself is not unpleasant, but the fact is that the author depends too much upon unpleasantness in the minds of the audience for the play to be altogether unobjectionable. The story is that a little girl at a boarding school imagines herself to be so important that she must always be in the centre of the picture and courts punishment with this object. She revenges herself by lying about her school-mistresses, and with the disastrous effect that they are ruined and their school closed. All this I found extremely disagreeable. But the lie told about these two women is discovered by one of them to have some truth in it. That is the painful but dramatic climax of the play—painful as all revelation of oneself to oneself is painful. In this climax Valerie Taylor proved herself to be one of our most vital actresses. Indeed, I know no actress so spiritual in her playing as she: I have said this before and I say it again; for I have too few opportunities of seeing her. Her Martha Dobie revealed the woman's heart: we saw causes not merely effects in her playing. Ursula

## PLAYS OF THE MONTH

Jeans as the other school mistress, Karen Wright, had a more conventional piece of acting to present, and she did it with great sincerity. The play should be seen; for it is an exposure of the cruelty of human beings to each other, and we cannot too often be reminded of that. Hedley Briggs's settings were very good, and Norman Marshall's production was as accomplished as usual.

Arthur Watkyn's "Muted Strings" at Daly's Theatre, gave Keneth Kent an opportunity of making a romantic figure of Beethoven. The play is poor stuff, with a few good lines and a few effective scenes, especially the last; but in the main it is an old fashioned patchwork. It was given an undistinguished production. Yet the magic of the personality of the great musician came out upon the stage and it was possible to be thrilled by this devotion to something greater than a man's own self. "The music has to be written," he said, and we felt it to be so. Mr. Kent was convincing because he allowed nothing to interfere with his grip upon the part. His concentration

was enormous and every member of the audience felt it. Others had less to catch on to, and they did not always succeed. Had the play been treated with less realism and with more romance, it would have been more to my taste.

Among other plays of the month was Ian Hay's "The Housemaster" at the Apollo Theatre, written for the great public and giving in generous measure the sentiment and humour that it likes so well. The author knows how to write such plays, the actors how to play them, and the public how to enjoy them, and this is a good example. "Young Madame Conti" at the Savoy Theatre was an intellectual thriller, in which Constance Cummings was able to put terrific power into a Court scene. Bruno Frank is a clever dramatist and his play had clever adaptors in Hubert Griffith and Benn W. Levy, so that it should last for some time. Altogether a clever piece of work, with no graces but those of efficiency, and heartless in the sense of being really indifferent to the human heart.

## ADMINISTRATION OF THE FESTIVAL

The following is a report of a meeting of the Central Festival Committee held in London on Saturday, November 21st, to consider the suggestions and criticisms concerning the administration of the Festival which were offered by Mr. John Bourne. The meeting was attended by 14 out of 16 members and included representatives from Scotland and Wales. (*For Editorial comment see page 38.*)

THE Chairman, Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth, after thanking Mr. Bourne for his acceptance of the invitation to attend, said that the Committee would be glad to be informed (1) of any criticism which Mr. Bourne had to make, (2) of any concrete proposals he would suggest for the improvement of the Festival.

In the course of a lengthy discussion which dealt with all sides of Festival work, Mr. Bourne made ten concrete suggestions which are printed in italics below, together with the considered replies of the Committee as unanimously agreed at a further meeting held after Mr. Bourne had left.

### MR. BOURNE'S PROPOSALS.

1. *That a special Conference dealing with the*

*Festival be held annually as an opportunity to all Societies to air their views.*

In view of the fact that, at present, proposals concerning details of Festival organisation are not admitted to the Agenda of the Annual Conference of the League, the Committee recommends that a special Festival Session should be arranged to take place at the time of each Annual Conference of the League.

2. *That the constitution of the Central Festival Committee be altered so as to make it either completely democratic or completely dictatorial.*

The Festival Committee does not see its way to recommend any alteration in the present system of election to the Central Festival Committee which is now constituted as a Sub-Committee of the Council of the League, the Festival being one of the League's ordinary activities. Under the present constitution the Council nominates three members to the Central Festival Committee, which consists of 16 persons, the remainder being democratically

## ADMINISTRATION OF THE FESTIVAL

elected, with the exception of the Chairman and the Hon. Treasurer.

3. *That with a view to modifying the competitive element the National character of the Festival be abandoned and that it be carried on by a series of County Festivals without Area or National Finals.*

The Committee is of the opinion that the National character of the Festival is the feature which differentiates it from all other Festivals and is its chief attraction.

4. *That one system of finance should operate throughout all the Festival Areas.*

A uniform system of finance has always been the ultimate aim of the Committee, but the practical difficulties are greater than may be appreciated. The problem is constantly before the attention of the Committee.

5. *That the Festival be more strictly separated from the R.C.C. and similar organisations on the ground that the arrangement is complicated and gives an undue financial advantage to rural Societies in comparison with those from towns.*

The Committee believes that Mr. Bourne is under a misapprehension as to the facilities accorded to R.C.C. teams. These facilities merely give the right of Festival entry under definite limitations, and are also available to town Societies under certain conditions. The extension of facilities to town Societies is under consideration. It should be remembered that one of the objects of the League is to encourage Drama in the Rural Areas.

6. *That the Marking System should be revised and rendered more definite in consultation with the adjudicators.*

The present Marking System was drawn up in consultation with several adjudicators only two years ago, and the Committee feels that it is undesirable to alter it too frequently.

7. *That with a view to eliminating "undue influence" private hospitality should not be offered to adjudicators unless by hosts who are unconnected with any of the teams entering.*

The objection to private hospitality is appreciated by the Committee and it is avoided so far as practically possible, but on financial grounds the Committee cannot see its way to dispense with it entirely.

8. *That with a view to securing better adjudication a School for adjudicators be arranged and a list of "Do's and Don'ts" drawn up for their instruction.*

A week-end Conference for adjudicators at which a special play is to be produced, and

adjudicators examined thereon, was already decided upon last Summer, and the Conference will take place in London on December 5th and 6th next. All adjudicators already on the Panel have been invited together with twenty new applicants. The Instructions to Adjudicators have been recently revised and are already in circulation. It will be found that several of the problems mentioned by Mr. Bourne have already been dealt with.

9. *That in every Division or Sub-Division a meeting of all teams should be held both before and subsequent to the Festival.*

It is already the practice to hold a meeting of all affiliated Societies once a year and in most districts they are held twice, or even more frequently.

10. *That the judges at the Festival Finals should be selected from those who have judged in the preliminary Festivals.*

This is a matter about which divergent views are held, and will be further debated.

**B**ESIDES the concrete suggestions which have been printed above, Mr. Bourne during the course of discussion put forward several criticisms which were not actually involved in his concrete suggestions.

While it is impossible to print a verbatim report of the whole discussion, the Committee feels that it would be well for the following points to be published in "Drama" so as to give the fullest possible indication of the general character of Mr. Bourne's criticisms.

1. On the subject of complaints in general, the Central Festival Committee recognises that in connection with a competition Festival there will probably always be a certain number of complaints. It is and always has been the Committee's endeavour to eliminate the causes of these when brought to its notice. The growth of the Festival in recent years has necessarily involved some changes in its atmosphere compared with the time when it was conducted in an experimental manner. The Festival now secures a wide publicity in the local Press throughout the country and thus becomes open to all kinds of public criticism both from interested and disinterested parties. To some extent such criticism is an indication of the vitality of the Movement and the interest which it arouses on all sides. Although some failures in administration are inevitable, the Committee sees no reason to think that the Festival, in spite of its extent, can be properly

## ADMINISTRATION OF THE FESTIVAL

regarded as "unwieldy," since its organisation is now decentralized.

2. Mr. Bourne mentioned as a sign of discontent that while new Societies come into the Festival many old ones drop out from year to year.

In the Committee's view this is inevitable. The tendency is most marked in London owing to special circumstances, but it is not typical of the rest of the country.

3. Mr. Bourne called attention to undue expense incurred by Societies by reason of their passage from lower to higher grades in the Festival.

While the Committee has full sympathy with teams which incur such expense, they are aware that the teams in question are in favour of the continuation of the Festival on a National basis. It is the intention of the Committee that special allowances should be made so soon as the Festival surplus permits.

4. Mr. Bourne referred to the fact that under the present distribution of Areas one team at the Final which had been selected from as few as forty entrants may be competing with another team which had been selected from as many as two hundred entries.

This criticism comes as no novel one to the Committee. From a logical point of view the present system is indefensible, but the unanimous desire of the Committee has been that a representative team from Scotland and Wales should always appear in the Final, and this objective has been held to over-rule the admitted inequality of the arrangement.

5. Mr. Bourne instanced several breaches of the Festival Rules, particularly in preliminary rounds.

The Committee can only say that any breaches of the Rules which have been brought to their notice have been promptly dealt with, and every effort is made to see that the Rules are observed throughout the Festival.

6. Mr. Bourne mentioned three cases in which special difficulties are reported to have occurred.

With regard to Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, the Committee states that Mr. Bourne is under a misapprehension as to the facts. The case of Wolverhampton which has arisen from conditions peculiar to the Western Area is already under consideration.

Finally, if it be said that the inevitable difficulties of a National Festival are such as to warrant the abandonment of the Festival,

it is pointed out that the continued increase in Festival entries from all parts of the country do not suggest that its value is not appreciated by the rank and file of the movement, while as a matter of general policy the Festival Committee endorses the opinion of the Council of the League that the Festival, as at present constituted on a National basis, is beneficial to the Amateur Movement in general and in particular a powerful asset to the progress and influence of the British Drama League.

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## ONE OF THE FESTIVAL SPIRITS

By Lady Iris Capell

At Conferences, at meetings, and in places where amateur dramatic affairs are hotly debated, one hears a good deal about the Festival Spirit. Everyone knows what is meant by that term, though it is seldom defined—except perhaps as that quality conspicuously lacking in all teams that compete with one's own. Rather less is said about a more definable spirit, one which influences our lives as well as our Festival entries—the Spirit of Compromise.

Idealists deny its existence, high-minded people shake their heads and call it a Bad Thing, but few human activities can prosper without it—least of all that amorphous organisation known as the British Drama League Community Theatre Festival. At the very birth of the Festival the Spirit of Compromise hovered over the cradle, nor does the 8-year-old child show any signs of outgrowing its beneficent tutelage.

Many are the subjects on which those concerned with the Festival disagree; Committees fight over Rules and Adjudicators, local officials argue about curtain settings and late entries, teams tear their hair over high costs, unsuitable halls, and exasperating conditions. One has only to listen to the talk of veterans to get the impression that the Festival is a war, a battle, a fight to the death.

Perhaps it would be, if it were not for the Spirit of Compromise, which manages things so that, although no one is completely satisfied, the Festival not only lives but grows from year



DETAIL FROM THE DANCE OF THE FURIES IN  
MR. RUPERT DOONE'S PRODUCTION OF "THE  
AGAMEMNON" FOR THE GROUP THEATRE,  
LONDON. COSTUMES BY ROBERT MEDLEY.





*Photo Pollard Crowther.*

SCENE FROM "OSCAR WILDE" BY LESLIE AND SEWELL STOKES, AS RECENTLY PRODUCED BY NORMAN MARSHALL, AT THE GATE THEATRE, LONDON.

## ONE OF THE FESTIVAL SPIRITS

to year. Almost every condition under which it exists is a compromise, usually, though not always, between the ideal and the practicable. The choice of an adjudicator, for example, is a compromise between the intelligent, knowledgeable, kindly critic that everyone wants—and the man who can be got to do the work for the money available from entry fees.

The Rules in general are a compromise between the ideals that animate the Festival and the regulations necessary to a competition. Such particular rules as that much-debated one requiring all teams to play in a curtain setting are a compromise between the desire to encourage amateur scenic design, and the desire to equalise conditions between rich and poor entrants.

Even your individual entry is a series of compromises—between the play you like, and the play you hope the Adjudicator will like; between your natural desire to display the abilities of your brilliant team, and your equally laudable wish to keep your Society's hard-earned money in the Bank.

As for the members of the local Committee, their existence is one long compromise; keeping B.D.L. Rules, attracting difficult but desirable entrants, assessing the potentialities of different halls, enticing large audiences without spending any money on advertising—their multifarious activities would be impossible without the discretion that compromise implies. However idealistic they would prefer to be, they know—and we all should realise—that too many factors enter into the making of a competitive Festival to enable it to be simply and perfectly run; that without compromise there could be no Festival.

However often the Rules are altered, however much conditions are improved, there will always be grumblers; and often the worst grumblers will be the idealists who cannot put up with imperfection. For them the only solution is the abandonment of the Festival—or of some of their ideals; for if we want this competitive Festival to continue in its present form we must make up our minds to put up with the complications, the anomalies, the inconsistencies and the compromise inherent in its organisation.

Sir John Martin Harvey's revival of "Oedipus" last month at Drury Lane has been followed by the Group Theatre's more experimental performance of the "Agamemnon" at the Westminster. The former was the most magnificent production of a Greek play in recent times. Both have been illustrated in "Drama."

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### THE BEN GREET MEMORIAL

Sir,

The death last spring of Sir Philip Ben Greet meant for many not only the passing of a familiar figure from the theatrical world, or from the greensward of the Open Air Theatre, but the loss of someone to whom they owed a debt of personal gratitude because he first showed them the living power of Shakespeare.

His company, the Ben Greet Players, will long be remembered for the valuable work they did all over the country in pastoral settings and for the benefit of schools, and his work at the Old Vic during the years 1914-1918 did much to establish the love of, and need for, Shakespeare in our capital.

Among the many for whom "B.G." brought our greatest dramatist back from the classroom and the study to his rightful place, there must again be many who wish his memory to be kept green for future generations of Shakespeare lovers. So many of our great players owe much of their success to the training and advice given by him at the beginning of their careers.

For such a man what more fitting memorial than a studentship for stage training, endowed in perpetuity? The importance of youth was part of his creed. Such a studentship will be a commemoration benefiting the young talent he loved to discover, and, if the talent be worthy, giving to future young audiences a succession to hold for them his flaming torch of love for the theatre as a whole, and for Shakespeare as its highest part. The studentship will, as is appropriate, be held at the Old Vic.

Donations for this purpose should be sent to:—"BEN GREET MEMORIAL FUND," Williams Deacon's Bank Ltd., 9, Pall Mall, London, S.W.1.

Yours faithfully,  
(Signed)

COSMO CANTUAR	SYDNEY W. CARROLL
LYTTON	DAN EDWARDS
LILIAN BAYLES	EVELINE M. LOWE
SYBIL THORNDIKE,	(Hon. Treasurer)

### THE PLAYWRIGHTS' CLUB.

The Playwrights' Club has recently produced at King George's Hall, London, Mr. Martin Holmes's historical play, "Crichton the Scholar." The play deals with the incidents leading up to the death of the admirable Crichton in Mantua in 1582, and a great deal of careful thought and dramatic feeling have gone to the making of it. The first two Acts are admirable, but the play suffers at its close owing to an over elaboration of treatment. One feels that the author has applied an intensity of research into motive and character which is almost scientific, so the play lacks something of that fluidity which can make even a complicated theme acceptable on the stage. Nevertheless, the dialogue is always entertaining, and one feels that here is an historical play which with some combing-out of unessentials might become a very appealing drama.

On the whole the acting attained a high level, Mr. Anthony Mouravieff showed undoubted talent as Crichton, and the play was excellently produced by Mr. Rivington Homes.

## BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF  
**THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE**  
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*Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.*

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IT will be seen that this number of "Drama" is concerned almost entirely with matters affecting the organisation of the League, so that various features of more general interest have had to be held over. The rules of the League, as passed in their revised form at a General Meeting held on November 20th, are printed for the benefit of existing members. The principal change refers to the date of the Annual General Meeting which will henceforth take place during November in each year instead of in the month of June. The Minutes of the recent Conference at Liverpool will be found in full, and here we may say that all the Resolutions passed will be duly implemented by the Council. For instance, we shall start in the January Number a diary of forthcoming events in the European Theatre. This feature will appear hereafter in every December and June Number of the magazine. As time goes on we hope to obtain the help of efficient correspondents in every country, together with the co-operation of the various

Ministries who we know are always anxious to publish details of artistic work in their respective countries.

Some readers may feel surprised by the opposition aroused by Mr. John Bourne's Resolution at the Liverpool Conference dealing with Festival administration. A perusal of recent issues of the Journal of which Mr. John Bourne is Editor should offer ample explanation. During the last few months the Journal in question has published a series of editorial comments on the League which have been far from polite. Nevertheless, the League has always welcomed criticism, and whatever may be the policy underlying Mr. Bourne's charges, the League was very pleased to have them investigated. Arrangements for this were promptly made. A Committee of Enquiry was called in London on Saturday, November 21st, and we are particularly glad that Mr. John Bourne attended in person and expressed his opinions. A full report of the meeting appears in the present issue.

If we thought that Mr. Bourne's attitude was shared by any considerable number of our members we should be the first to acknowledge it, for to keep in touch with our members and to respond to their wishes is our constant preoccupation. But although at Liverpool Mr. Bourne made great play with the fabulous expense incurred by his Firm on the supply of press cuttings, it would have been more to the point if he had indicated the precise number of centres whence came evidence of the discontent to which he referred. From our own enquiries, and from a perusal of our own cuttings, we are led to believe that the general attitude is all the other way.

In conclusion, we can only say that, as things are, we feel that no very useful purpose has been served by this controversy, unless it be the bringing into the open of a queer attempt to disintegrate the National Festival, and to inflame a sense of rivalry between that Festival and various other Festivals which have every right to exist, and with which we desire nothing better than to continue to be on friendly terms.

# A CHRISTMAS BOOK LIST

By F. Sladen-Smith

- "Noises Off." By Frank Napier. Muller. 3s. 6d.  
 "Early Victorian Drama." By Ernest Reynolds. Heffer. 6s.  
 "Theatre Collections in Libraries and Museums." By Rosamond Gilder and George Freedley. Stevens & Brown. 7s. 6d.  
 "99 Points for Amateur Actors." By Philip Beaufoy Barry. French. 1s.  
 "The Agamemnon of Aeschylus." Translated by Louis MacNeice. Faber & Faber. 5s.  
 "The Binding of Prometheus." Translated by Lennox J. Morrison. Basil Blackwell. 2s. 6d.  
 "The Bacchæ of Euripides." Translated by Francis A. Evelyn. Heath Cranton. 1s. 6d.  
 "The Emancipist." By Major-Gen. John Macquarie Antill and Rose Antill de Warren. Angus & Robertson. 3s. 6d.  
 "Windmills." By P. A. Guiton. Favil. Press. 2s. 6d.  
 "Line Engaged." By Jack de Leon and Jack Celestin. Play Rights & Publications. 2s.  
 "The Silent Witness." By Jack de Leon and Jack Celestin. Play Rights & Publications. 2s.  
 "The Stars May Change." By Lilian Smee. Garamond Press. 2s.  
 "Ishmael." By Oliver Marlow. Garamond Press. 2s.  
 "Mary Tudor." By Wilfrid Grantham. Play Rights & Publications. 2s.  
 "No Man's Island." By Muriel and Sydney Box. Garamond Press. 2s.  
 "Treasure Island." Adapted by James Bernard Fagan. Cassell. 3s. 6d.  
 "Dick Whittington." By Margaret Carter. French. 1s.

AT last a book on the all-important subject of "Noises off" has appeared. Mr. Frank Napier is not only well qualified to describe in detail the methods of obtaining all stage sounds from clock-ticks to earthquakes, but he writes in so light, amusing a style that the grimmest of problems wear a different aspect after he has dealt with them. One of Mr. Napier's ambitions is to arrange a really successful battle "without"—and we can well believe that if the Old Vic decided to stage the end of the world, Mr. Napier would be at hand to see that it was well and truly accomplished. Meanwhile, here is a book which all stage workers should make haste to possess.

The fact that the years 1830 to 1870 produced neither writers or plays of outstanding merit does not prevent Mr. Ernest Reynolds' study, "Early Victorian Drama," from being an absorbing volume. It is an extraordinary period, probably best represented by the terrific melodramas rather than the attempted archaeological spectacles. Hack dramatists, flamboyant actors, all-powerful scene painters and heavy poets crowd the boards, as well as reformers such as Robertson, and the theatre for which they worked is still sufficiently near us to make Mr. Reynolds' descriptions strangely fascinating. "Theatre Collections in Libraries and Museums," compiled by Miss Rosamond Gilder and Mr. George Freedley contains valuable and detailed information regarding the theatre collections of Europe, Asia and America. There are odd glimpses of masses of unknown material still waiting for the eager research

student—whose immediate reaction to this book will probably be a longing to set out on a world tour. Mr. Philip Beaufoy Barry has written "99 Points for Amateur Actors," and very sound points they are, and most of them can hardly be repeated too often. Indeed, the only theatrical subject of which the author appears at all ignorant is the progress of the amateur world for which he writes.

It is interesting to see that all the other books in this month's series are long plays. There are two translations of Aeschylus. Mr. Louis MacNeice's version of "The Agamemnon" (used by the Gate Theatre for their recent production of the play) is intended for the stage, and, as the translator points out, sacrifices somewhat the liturgical atmosphere in favour of a more dramatic rendering. The result is at times markedly impressive, as in the scenes between Cassandra and the Chorus—at other times there is a danger of unconscious humour. Mr. Lennox J. Morrison's translation of "The Binding of Prometheus" aims at complete fidelity, but it is not the less stage-worthy on that account. It is certainly workmanlike, and often powerful. Mr. Francis A. Evelyn's translation of "The Bacchæ of Euripides" is, of necessity, in a different vein; the lyrical beauty of the Choral Odes and the quick pace of some of the dialogue making very different reading from the two sterner tragedies.

"The Emancipist" is an Australian historical drama by Major-General John Macquarie Antill, and his daughter, Rose Antill-de Warren. It concerns the life of William Redfern, a Surgeon who, in 1797, was court-martialed for speaking his mind about the abuses in the navy of his time, but later, after much valuable work in New South Wales, received a free pardon. The earlier scenes have some power; but it might have been well if the authors had given us episodes from the whole of the life of this remarkable man instead of lingering over the details of a respectable but not particularly interesting love affair. A note to "Windmills" by Mr. P. A. Guiton, informs us that there has been no attempt to clear up its mysteries—but the mysteries are not presented with sufficient strength to claim much attention, and, possibly the chief mystery is why a fairly good situation should be frittered away so incessantly. "Line Engaged" is the inadequate title of a murder play in which it is a relief to find the authors, Mr. Jack de Leon and Mr. Jack Celestin, have not considered it incumbent to arrest or to kill off the lady who committed the crime. All she does is to confess to the family and break down, thus bringing to an end a play which contains considerable excitement. Another murder play by the same authors is "The Silent Witness." This is complete with Old Bailey scene and final revelations which clear everyone who deserves to be cleared. No audience could watch this play without some thrills, and many audiences would enjoy it immensely. "The Stars May Change" is a likeable comedy by Miss Lilian Smee. There are deft touches of characterization, a few good lines, and at the end everyone seems well assorted—even the lady whose collecting mania so nearly causes disaster. "Ishmael" by Mr. Oliver Marlow, deals with various aspects of the negro question in America. The writing is often crude and the demands on stagecraft are considerable. A terrible, and, at times, some-

## A CHRISTMAS BOOK LIST

what revolting series of incidents lead up to the lynching of the pitiable hero—the albino, Ishmael. Certainly not a play for everybody.

"Mary Tudor" by Mr. Wilfrid Grantham, is one of those excellent dramas which rouse high hopes only to result in a feeling of disappointment. The period chosen is deeply interesting, the writing is sober, dignified and moving—and yet, when we leave the weary and lonely Queen in the darkness of the end, it is difficult to feel that any new or especially dramatic revelation either of character or of historical analysis has taken place. "No Man's Island," a play for all-women cast by Muriel and Sydney Box is amusing and nearly always compels attention. More could have been made of the exciting material—nine women shipwrecked on a tropical island is a good situation!—but

many opportunities, both for characterization and humour, have been seized, and the play should prove valuable to women's groups who are tired of a series of small pieces and would like to adventure on a full evening's work.

The adaptation of "Treasure Island" by Mr. James Bernard Fagan, was first presented in the December of 1922, and is now published for the first time. Despite compressions, much of the flavour of the novel is retained and the constant excitement is well calculated to leave both producer and audience breathless. "Dick Whittington" is a pantomime for children in two acts by Miss Margaret Carter. There are plenty of songs and dances; there is much mild humour; and no doubt the piece will commend itself to producers in search of this type of Christmas festivity.

## NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

### SHAKESPEARE AS HE WAS PLAYED.

Mr. Robert Atkins announces performances of Shakespeare's "Henry V." by the Bankside Players' Society, in the Elizabethan manner at The Ring, Blackfriars, on Sundays, December 6th and 13th at 8.30 p.m. Membership of the Society may be obtained on payment of 1s., and seats for the performances will be available at various prices from 2s. 6d. to 10s. 6d. Members are also eligible to purchase guest tickets. This is an unusual opportunity to witness a Shakespeare play under conditions very similar to those of its original production, with a cast of well-known players, and all those interested should apply for further particulars to the Bankside Players' Society, 32, Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.1.

### CLIFTON ARTS CLUB DRAMATIC CONTEST.

This contest deserves to be still more widely known. There are very few opportunities for the new dramatists, and when the whole aim of a contest is to give the dramatist the benefit of actual performance with adjudication, its value must be obvious. It has been felt by the organizers that the best method was to have the same judge for both the M.S. and the performances. Out of the many M.S. submitted the judge selects nine for production by various Societies, and out of these nine, three are selected for the final, and out of these three, two are selected for prizes as the best plays when produced. There is also a trophy for the best team in the whole Festival. The process of elimination works to so fine a point that it might well be imagined that here is material for the controversies which are the least happy feature of some Festivals. But the Festival spirit is nowhere more in evidence than in the Clifton Arts Club; in few places is the adjudicator so sure, not only of fair play, but of a delightful atmosphere which makes his work a pleasure from start to finish. The plays which won first and second prizes at the tenth Contest (Nov. 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th) were (1st) "Food for Thought," by Maud Cassidy and Peter Coke, presented by the Portishaed Players, (2nd) Substitute for Living," by Anne Allardyce, produced by Nora Roberts. The trophy for the best team work was won by Arthur Beale's cast in "The Optimist," also by Anne Allardyce. On the Saturday night the Lady Mayoress of Bristol, Mrs. C. T. Budgett, herself a prize winner in the first Contest, ten years ago, presided, making a singularly graceful speech. F. SLADEN-SMITH.

### INTERNATIONAL ONE-ACT PLAY THEATRE.

The International One-Act Play Theatre held its Third Annual Performance of Prize Plays at the Vaudeville Theatre on Sunday, November 8th. The Judges were Miss Edith Evans, Mr. John Drinkwater, and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth, and they unanimously awarded the premier place to "Her Affairs in Order" by Mada Gage Bolton. This was a particularly effective play, and may be cordially recommended for performance by any organisation which does not flinch from a somewhat heart-rending theme.

Of the two other plays, "The Dogs of War" by Marjorie R. Watson is a very dramatic little play of nineteenth century Russia with a fine "curtain." "The Machine" by Anna Thompson Cook is a satire on the work of a great newspaper with poignant personal tragedy woven in.

All the plays are shortly to be published by Messrs. Allen & Unwin.

### "THEATRE ROYAL."

There were times when this production by the Royal Aircraft Establishment Dramatic Society, Farnborough, promised to give us the romantic emotionalism and vivid arrogance of stage life as it used to be believed in by a gullible public. But unfortunately the producer and the players managed just to fall short of the mood required by the theme. Within this limitation the play was very competently produced by Mr. Woodward Nutt, especially as regards lighting and setting, and also demonstrated that a real attempt was being made to achieve speed and "slickness." Outstanding amongst the players was Mr. Richard Atcherley who played, Anthony Cavendish with a most refreshing exuberance and a convincing brilliance such as one would expect from the Cavendish family. Julie and Fanny Cavendish played by Miss Kennett and Mrs. Woodward Nutt were both charming and dominant, but rather lacked the streak of "theatricality" without which the Cavendish's would not have found life worth living. The same criticism could also be levelled at Miss Goddard as Kitty; this actress shows promise of excellent performances in the future. Miss Evens made Della into an interesting and convincing character part (with a most believable American accent) and Mr. Constant as Gilbert Marshall brought the right measure of respectability and convention into the show.

G. E. MIDDLEDITCH.



## NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

### LONDON ACADEMY OF MUSIC.

The Yorke Trotter system, by which music is memorized without the aid of an instrument, was illustrated this month at a concert given by pupils of the London Academy of Music. Three pupils extemporized on themes they had not previously seen, specially composed by Solomon. A fourth was handed a complete pianoforte work by Somervell during the performance and played it from memory before the concert was over, both in its original key (D major) and transposed (F major). The Academy, established seventy-five years ago, also trains pupils in elocution and acting and their success in this direction was exemplified by some short scenes from Shakespeare. Before earning a diploma, a student has to satisfy two celebrated actors or actresses that he would be "at home" with them on the professional stage.

Miss Irene Vanbrugh, who distributed the awards of the Midsummer Examinations, gave some useful advice to would-be actors. They should be patient, cautious in choosing between the good part and the good engagement—if they are fortunate enough to have the option—and they should regard success only as a spur to further effort.

R.C.C.

### VILLAGE PLAYWRITING COMPETITION.

The Rules of the Village Playwriting Competition for 1937 are now ready and are obtainable from Miss Janet Scrutton, the Hon. Secretary of the Competition, Village Drama Section of the British Drama League.

This competition is the thirteenth in the series, and book prizes to the value of two guineas are offered in the various classes. In addition, the best play in the whole competition will be published, with recommendations for publication of any other plays likely to be of value to the villages.

Intending competitors should at once apply for a copy of the rules since the last day on which entries can be accepted is February 1st next.

### CONFERENCE OF EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS.

This annual Conference which is held at University College, Gower Street, will this year include two meetings of special importance to members of the British Drama League. On Tuesday, January 5th, at 11 a.m., the Association of Teachers of Speech and Drama will hold a meeting, the subject of which is "Variants of Spoken English, illustrated by Gramophone Records from the British Drama League's Survey of British Dialects." The Chair will be taken by Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth, and the Speakers will be Miss Elsie Fogerty, C.B.E., and Mr. Clifford Turner.

Then on Friday, January 8th, at 5 p.m., the British Drama League holds a meeting on "The Art of Mime in Education" at which an address will be given by Mr. Frank Birch. Miss Irene Mawer of the Institute of Mime will also speak, and will introduce a special demonstration of Mime by her students.

Members of the Drama League interested in either of the above subjects should make a point of attending.

### ERRATUM.

On page 31 of the last number of "Drama" under the heading Nottingham Playgoers' Club, the name of the Secretary and author of "Historic Costuming" should have appeared as Mr. Nevil Truman.

### LIVERPOOL PLAYHOUSE SILVER JUBILEE DINNER.

To commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Liverpool Playhouse, the oldest repertory theatre in the country, a dinner was held on Sunday, November 15th, at the Aephe Hotel, Liverpool, attended by more than 200 guests, who included the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Liverpool, Lord Derby, Lord Leverhulme, Mr. Alec Rea and many distinguished theatrical figures.

Colonel Sir John Shute, M.P., chairman of the board of directors of the Playhouse presided.

The toast of the "Liverpool Repertory Theatre" was proposed by the Lord Mayor, who said that no city was complete without a repertory theatre, that was a sign of prosperity, and a part of the culture of the community. Lord Leverhulme, in seconding, paid tribute to the board of directors, and to Mr. William Armstrong and Miss Carpenter, the licensee and manager.

Mr. William Armstrong, replying on behalf of his fellow-directors and himself, said that throughout the twenty-five years of the theatre's "strange eventful history" there had burned a fine flame of courage and faith in its ultimate success. Many had contributed to that success, and among them he would ask the company not to forget the "nameless ones,"—the theatre-staff, the orchestra, the stage-workers, who, though they never got any publicity, felt themselves, and were, as much a part of the living theatre as those more in the public eye.

### DALCROZE IN LONDON.

Under the personal direction of M. Jacques Dalcroze a Christmas Holiday and Post Graduate Course in Eurythmics will be given from Monday, December 28th to January 2nd. The Course will take place at the London School of Dalcroze Eurythmics, 37, Fitzroy Square, W.1., and M. Jacques Dalcroze will also give a demonstration for the Dalcroze Society on January 6th at University College, London.

### AT MARGATE.

The Astra Maris Amateur Players have recently presented "Ali Baba" adapted from "The Arabian Nights" by Edward Snow and Leonard Saunders. The Pantomime was produced under the direction of Anne Keeble, cleverly acted by the entire cast, and charmingly supported by a company of dancers and players. This Pantomime was a great success and attracted a large audience.

### LATEST RELEASES.

This month's 'releases,' announced by Messrs. Samuel French, include: "Someone at the Door," "Promise," and "Wisdom Teeth". Amateur performing rights of the first two plays are not yet available in all districts, and societies are advised to inquire of the agents for definite information, before making arrangements for rehearsals.

The ninth book of "The One-Act Theatre," and the 1937 "Guide to Selecting Plays" have recently been published by Messrs. French. "The One-Act Theatre" contains seven short plays, some of which should meet the Festival needs of societies on the look-out for new material.

# THE DRAMA LEAGUE CONFERENCE

MINUTES of the 17th Annual Conference of the British Drama League held at Liverpool on Saturday, October 24th, 1936, at 10.30 a.m.  
Present—Mr Geoffrey Whitworth (in the chair) and 151 Delegates and Members.

The Minutes of the last Conference were taken as read and signed.

*Chairman's Opening Address:*

In opening the Conference Mr. Whitworth said he was glad to see such a large number of Delegates and Members. The League was delighted to visit Liverpool once more, and to enjoy the hospitality of the Merseyside Division. He continued that during the past year the League had been strengthened by a more fully representative Council, and much thought had been given to the work of the County Committees which had been set up. Their aim was the mobilisation of all the forces of the League throughout the country. A list of suggested activities would shortly be circulated, and some financial assistance would be forthcoming. He hoped that this impetus be for the good of all members and affiliated societies. He then called on Miss Kelly to propose her resolution.

*Proposed by Miss Kelly—*

*"That this Conference recommends that the League should give active support to dramatic work among the Youth Organisations."*

Miss Kelly said she thought her resolution would not be controversial but she wished to emphasize that the British Drama League was a Community, membership of which not only entitled one to receive benefits, but involved the privilege of encouraging and helping weaker members. The Junior Drama Committee was organising help for juniors from the age of 14 to 18, the age when vitality was overflowing, and in need of direction. The practice of Drama gave a power to live which could be afforded by no other art. The Junior Drama Committee had existed for three years, and during that period a list of plays for Young Players had been drawn up, elementary Courses had been held, producers had been provided, and in London, a Junior Drama Festival had been held. This was work that needed courage, patience, and a keen sense of sympathy. Miss Kelly appealed to all members present to see that Junior Committees were set up in their various localities. The resolution was seconded by Miss Isabel Chisman.

Mr. Lingard said that everyone had been glad to hear from Miss Kelly of the efforts of the League in this direction. She thought the Conference might like to know that the Stockport Garrick Society had set up a Junior Section which had been running for 17 years.

Mr. Hubert Wood said he was anxious that this resolution should not be regarded merely as a pious one. If it were passed, would the members present be prepared to create organisations which would carry out this work?

The Chairman informed the Conference that one of the activities suggested to County Committees was the organisation of Junior Work. The Resolution on being put to the vote, was carried unanimously.

*Proposed by Miss Elsie Fogerty, C.B.E.—*

*"That the use of the Drama for social purposes must not endanger the maintenance of a high artistic standard."*

Miss Fogerty said that recreational work was the most vital thing in the world to-day. The metric

character of modern life made Drama essential. Life went perpetually to the time-throb of a machine. On one side Jazz made an effort to strike against that metric beat, while such a movement as tap dancing submitted the whole body to the mere rhythm of a machine. An Art like Drama was one of the most vital needs of human beings to-day. Miss Fogerty urged the members of the League to remember that no dramatic effort however splendidly philanthropic could continue to exist unless there was a determination to have the greatest Theatre that the world possessed. At present the Theatre was being attacked by the Film which was being used in ways subtly and profoundly demoralising. In a few years it would be found impossible to listen to Shakespeare because it was too long—and the professional Theatre in this Country would be in the same position as the Theatre in Australia and New Zealand. Unless a strong fight was put up in every town, the theatre would die from the head downwards and the art of the people would become boring and commonplace, under the shadow of the universal film.

The resolution was seconded by the Hon. Mary Pakington who said she was glad to support Miss Fogerty who had done so much to uphold the best interests of the Theatre. She did not however, quite share Miss Fogerty's gloomy view as she believed that there were many Repertory Theatres which were booming. Yet there was no doubt that films were taking away audiences, and every effort should be made to support the Theatre both professional and amateur.

Miss Somers (Port Sunlight Players) thought that a good deal could be learnt from the Films which would help in dramatic work.

Lady Iris Capell (Harlequins Club) said she thought the Conference had wandered from the resolution, and had not considered how a high artistic standard could be maintained. Whatever work was undertaken, care should be taken that the cause of Drama was enhanced. However small the effort might be, it could bring appreciation of the Drama and life and interest to the people connected with it.

In reply Miss Fogerty said the point she wanted to make was that the amateur actor should not be encouraged to overlook the needs of the professional theatre. She suggested that First Nighter Clubs should be established—flying matinees should be encouraged, the demand for Municipal Theatres shall be fostered, and above all, an effort made to raise £250,000 needed for the establishment of a National Theatre. The resolution on being put to the vote, was carried unanimously.

*Proposed by M. Michel Saint-Denis—*

*"That, in view of modern tendencies towards the isolation of one country from another in the political sphere, the British Drama League should maintain its policy of international co-operation in the sphere of Drama, and do its utmost to extend facilities for the mutual study of the art of the stage between the nations of the world."*

M. Saint-Denis' speech was printed in full in the November number of "Drama." The resolution was seconded by Mr. S. M. Fox.

The Chairman said that the League had done continuous work in encouraging contact with the foreign theatre. This very summer the League was represented at the Conference of Leisure at Hamburg, and the Liverpool Playgoers' Club had toured Northern

## THE DRAMA LEAGUE CONFERENCE

Germany with a production of "The Devil Among the Skins."

Mr. Sharman, speaking as a member of that Company said that they all felt the great benefits to be derived from contact with other Communities. He wished to thank M. Saint-Denis for his valuable speech.

Mr. Hubert Wood said M. Saint-Denis had given an inspiration to the members of the English Theatre, and he thought the effect of the speech was indescribable. It was most desirable that their feeling of exaltation should be maintained. All the members present would be inspired to do a great deal more for the English Theatre and so for the Theatre of the world.

The Rev. Seaward Beddow (Wycliffe Players, Leicester) said he thanked God that among all the divisions among nations there was one thing that stood firm, and that one thing was what the British Drama League stood for. International Co-operation in Dramatic Art would be hailed with joy between all nations.

Miss Wainwright (Street Play Reading Society) asked where information as to the traditional plays mentioned by M. Saint-Denis, could be obtained.

The Chairman said that twice a year an endeavour would be made to publish in "Drama" a calendar of events abroad.

Dr. Barker (Cumberland Drama League) said that the Cumberland Drama League had organised a small exhibition of Foreign Art and had purchased pictures of Russian Dramatic effort.

Mr. Woodfield (Woodfield Players, Doncaster) asked if the League could get hold of official foreign journals so that English people could subscribe to them.

M. Saint-Denis said he felt that the main point was new inspiration and fresh inventiveness inside the Amateur Movement, and this might often be obtained by contact with the New Movement abroad.

The Conference then adjourned for Lunch.

*Proposed by Dr. Gordon Bottomley—*

*"That to rule out the use of scenes from Shakespeare in the annual competitive drama Festival would main-  
tain the Community Drama movement and impair its usefulness."*

Dr. Bottomley said that at Community Drama gatherings he was usually looked upon as a defender of poetry. He believed that all was well with the Theatre in spite of the fact that in the Provincial towns the only professional Theatre had very often been turned into a Picture House. The amateur movement was waking up and it was only at the beginning of its influence. Turning to the use of Shakespeare in the Festival, Dr. Bottomley said that the speaking of Shakespeare's verse was an essential part of speech training and it was a well known truth that if one could act in a play by Shakespeare one could act in anything. He pleaded for freedom in choice of play. Whenever the British Theatre had made a contribution to civilisation, it had been done in freedom. He thought that Great Britain had made a success of freedom because the British people knew and cared about keeping the Law. He therefore proposed his resolution in the name of freedom.

Mr. Hubert Wood in seconding the resolution said that no one would consider for a moment ruling out scenes from Shakespeare in the Festival, but care should be taken that such scenes were not ruled out by implication. He thought the resolution had been prompted by Mr. John Drinkwater's remarks at the National Final last May, and if any misunderstanding was abroad,

the earliest opportunity should be taken to put it right. He hoped that this resolution would stand as an emphatic declaration that every possible encouragement would be given to the playing of Shakespeare in the Festival.

Mr. David Hitchin enquired what steps headquarters would take to implement this resolution. Would anything be done to inform misguided adjudicators of this discussion?

Mr. Whitworth promised on behalf of the Central Festival Committee that the attention of judges would be drawn to this resolution.

Mr. Bushill Matthews reminded the Conference that this resolution had been put forward in the name of freedom. The League existed to cultivate a catholic taste and he thought much harm would be done if it were not made clear that every type of play was welcome in the Festival.

The resolution on being put to the vote was carried unanimously.

*Proposed by the Liverpool Playgoers' Club—*

*"That in view of the aims of the British Drama League, especially that of encouraging the progressive element in the Art of the Theatre, this Conference recommends that all possible steps should be taken to secure full freedom of initiative and artistic endeavour throughout the Festival."*

In speaking to this resolution Mr. Maddock said that the Festival Authorities, by making everyone play within the same curtain set, merely put a premium on the costumes and furniture of wealthy societies. Teams, it was true, could introduce their own windows, doors and fireplaces, but all such compromise was bad. The effect on the standard of stage production throughout the country had been deplorable. Sloppy sets made for sloppy acting. Further, the setting had a great influence on the kind of play which was presented. Mr. Maddock concluded by urging that above all the Festival should be festive.

Mr. Francis Smith in seconding the motion said that Festival performances should show what amateurs could do in every branch of their art and he linked this resolution up with Dr. Bottomley's plea for freedom.

Mr. Benson (Medway Theatre Club) supported the resolution but pointed out the difficulty of accommodating several box sets at a single Festival. Mr. Maynard said he thought the present Festival Rule (B3) was fair to all entrants. Magnificent effects could be obtained with curtains. Another difficulty in regard to elaborate scenery was the increasing stringency of police regulations as to the fireproofing of scenery.

Miss Backhouse pointed out that it would be difficult to transfer a set built for a small local stage to fit the stage at the Old Vic.

Mr. Morley thought the use of curtains was very much more simple.

Dr. Barker (Cumberland Drama League) mentioned the difficulty of transporting flats from one village to another.

Mrs. Salaman said that a play presented in curtains directed more attention on the acting which was an advantage.

Mr. Chelioti supported the resolution and pointed out that no compulsion was suggested as to the use of flats.

Dr. Bottomley thought that a great step forward would be achieved in artistic presentation if players could emancipate themselves from the idea of photographic accuracy of background, and he added that

## THE DRAMA LEAGUE CONFERENCE

curtains were extremely good for poetry.

Mr. Wilson (Stockport Garrick Society) said he thought there was too great insistence on over-elaboration in the amateur world. There was a need for simplicity.

The chairman stated that the Liverpool Playgoers' Club proposal had been considered several times by the Central Festival Committee, but they would certainly reconsider the matter in the light of the discussion at the Conference. Mr. Maddock then withdrew his motion on this assurance by the Chairman.

*Proposed by Mr. John Bourne—*

*"That this Conference, anxious that the British Drama League Community Theatre Festival should serve the best interests of the League, urges the appointment of an independent Committee to investigate the general administration of the Festival with a view to recommending improvements in the organisation, or the abandonment of the Festival as at present constituted."*

Before calling on Mr. Bourne to speak, the Chairman said that he wished to make it quite plain at the outset that the Council welcomed all helpful criticism on its activities, and were glad of the opportunity offered by the Conference to obtain first hand evidence of the views of the members.

He then called on Mr. Bourne to move his resolution.

Mr. Bourne said that he knew his resolution would not be passed as he felt he was surrounded by all the antagonistic forces imaginable. In view of the opposition which he felt would be made he proposed to delete the last clause in his resolution so that it now ran as follows:—

*"That this Conference, anxious that the British Drama League Community Theatre Festival should serve the best interests of the League, urges the appointment of an independent Committee to investigate the general administration of the Festival with a view to recommending improvement in the organisation."*

Mr. Bourne continued that the Firm with which he was associated spent several hundreds of pounds annually for press cuttings on amateur drama, and he was therefore in a position to know a great deal about amateur dramatic activities throughout the country. The Festival had become a very different thing now from what it was a few years ago, and it was rapidly developing into a cut-throat competition. Dissatisfaction sometimes became so intense and feelings ran so high that at one Festival a man had been knocked senseless; Mr. Sladen-Smith had had a property port-hole thrown at him; and Mr. Bourne himself had been attacked by a woman with an umbrella. Wolverhampton, a town which had sent more teams to the Festival than any other of its size, had become so dissatisfied with the adjudication and financial arrangements that this year they were running their own Festival.

Derbyshire also said they would run the Festival in their own way without interference from London. Independent Festivals were being held everywhere notably at Morecambe, Blackpool, Harrogate and Lowestoft. In Nottingham a team was told it could not enter the National Festival direct but had to compete first of all in the Rural Community Council Festival. The Shrewsbury team which won the Cup this year spent £52.18.6 out of its own pocket. With semi-finals at Birmingham and Bournemouth, this Society had to travel 800 miles before reaching the Old Vic. One might point to the increase in entries as a proof that the Festival was popular, but taking the London

area as an example, 50% of the teams which entered last year had not entered again this year. Most of this state of affairs Mr. Bourne laid at the door of the Central Festival Committee which had got into a rut in which they had moved with snail-like pace, if at all.

In regard to adjudicators, Mr. Bourne said the Committee showed amazing laxity in some of the appointments. One adjudicator had asked for a seat in the first row owing to a total inability to see properly from the fourth row, another adjudicator was deaf, and another had refused to read the plays beforehand. He thought the adjudicators at the Final ought to be people who had had experience in the earlier rounds. Further the practice of giving hospitality to judges was unfair.

Mr. Bourne suggested that a Summer School for Adjudicators should be held. Compared with independent Festivals the organisation of the National Festival was at a low ebb, and wherever he went and especially in Scotland he found more efficient organisation than that of the League. He suggested that an independent Committee should be set up to investigate these matters, a Committee composed of people experienced in Festivals but not connected with the Central Festival Committee which he distrusted.

The resolution was seconded by Mr. Maynard who said that he found a good deal of slackness on the part of local committees, particularly in the keeping of the time limit for stage setting and striking. He pointed out that the fares of the Shrewsbury team alluded to by Mr. Bourne were paid by the Festival Committee, but he added that if the Festival could be run on the lines of the S.C.D.A. it would be a great improvement.

Mr. Hubert Wood said he regarded this resolution as a vote of censure on the Central Festival Committee. While he agreed that there were faults in the Festival, it was infamous to suggest that the Committee was not aware of them, and was not doing its utmost to improve matters. Every one of Mr. Bourne's criticisms should have been sent to the Committee. It was, of course, lamentable that Wolverhampton had taken the course it had, but this sort of thing was bound to happen now and then, and there were still some 700 societies up and down the country which had not shown any signs of dissatisfaction. He resented very much the accusation that other Festivals were better run. At the Harrogate independent Festival, the competing teams were allowed no expenses, but money prizes were given. Referring to the case of the Nottingham Society instanced by Mr. Bourne, this matter had already been dealt with by the Northern Area Committee. Mr. Wood continued that if Mr. Bourne had any suggestions for the improvement of the Festival they would be very carefully considered, but he was of the opinion that the resolution was an insult which had not been put forward in the interests of the British Drama League.

Mr. Bushill Matthews said that he believed the mover of this resolution had already referred in a certain journal to the Central Festival Committee as "Yes Men" and "The Old Gang." He asked what would be the function of the proposed independent Committee? Mr. Bourne suggested a School for adjudicators—this had already been put in hand. As to the choice of adjudicators for the Finals, perhaps what was wanted was that Mr. Bourne himself should adjudicate these.

At this point Mr. Bourne protested against such personalities and called for protection from the Chair.

Continuing Mr. Bushill Matthews said that he had only been a member of the Central Festival Committee for two years, but he assured the Conference that it was



A LADY OF THE COURT OF HENRY VIII.  
DRESSED BY THE DRAMA LEAGUE COSTUME  
DEPARTMENT, 1936.





AN ELIZABETHAN PAGE DRESSED BY THE  
 DRAMA LEAGUE COSTUME DEPARTMENT,  
 1936.

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## THE DRAMA LEAGUE CONFERENCE

a very live body and every consideration would have been given to Mr. Bourne's criticisms if they had been laid before it.

Mr. George O. Sharman said that as a member of the Central Festival Committee he regretted that the discussion had involved personalities, but he wished to point out that the phrase "The Old Gang" as used by Mr. Bourne was totally inapplicable. Ten members of the Festival Committee were elected annually by the members of the League, and only three by the Council. If there was dissatisfaction with the Committee it was up to the members to elect the people they wanted.

Mr. Heaven (Portishead Players) supported Mr. Wood in his opinion that the resolution was a vote of censure.

Mr. Maynard said that in seconding the resolution he had no idea that it was intended as a vote of censure.

Miss Aitkin (S.C.D.A. South West Division) said that until this year the Scottish rules had been practically identical with those of the League, and she added "England control yourself, Scotland is looking on!"

Mr. James Sutcliffe proposed an amendment that the words "Central Festival Committee" should be substituted for "independent Committee." This amendment was supported by Miss Phoebe Rees.

Mr. Bourne said he did not like the amendment, and rather than accept it he would withdraw his resolution.

Mr. Whitworth, speaking as chairman of the Central Festival Committee, said that it was easy for anyone to go about the country fomenting trouble instead of sending criticisms to the Committee established to deal with them. There were, of course, complaints, but he did not consider that the number had grown proportionately to the growth in Festival entries which had occurred in recent years. Everyone knew that Mr. Bourne was a magnificent journalist and he would like to make a suggestion which might provide..... (a voice) "Copy."

Mr. Whitworth: "Copy."

At this point Mr. Bourne rose from his seat saying that in view of the treatment which he had received from the Chair he would resign from the League, and would never undertake any further adjudication for it. He then left the Conference amid cries of protest. After a few moments he was forcibly brought back to the Hall, and said that he put himself in the hands of the meeting, that never in his experience had he heard a Chairman make such an offensive remark, and he could only remain if it were withdrawn. Cries of "Withdraw" rose from the body of the Hall. Mr. Wood then said that he regretted if any remark of his had been taken to be offensive. Mr. Whitworth said that if he had said anything which might have seemed offensive he withdrew it. (Applause).

Mr. Sutcliffe then proposed the following resolution which, he stated, should not be construed as a vote of censure on the Festival Committee:—

*"That this Conference, anxious that the British Drama League Community Theatre Festival should serve the best interests of the League, urges the Central Festival Committee to investigate the general administration of the Festival with a view to recommending improvements in the organisation thereof."*

This was carried by a large majority.

Mr. Heaven suggested and it was agreed to ask Mr. Bourne to attend a meeting of the Central Festival Committee and to bring forward his complaints.

*Place of the 1937 Conference.*

The Chairman reported that three invitations had

been received for the 1937 Conference *i.e.* from Bournemouth, Taunton and Cardiff.

Mr. Chelioti proposed that the invitation to Cardiff should be accepted.

This was seconded by Mr. Watson.

Mr. Harrison proposed and Mr. Benson seconded that the invitation to Bournemouth should be accepted.

Mrs. Salaman proposed and Miss Phoebe Rees seconded that Taunton should be visited.

On putting these proposals to the meeting, the majority of members voted that the invitation to Cardiff should be accepted.

The Chairman then proposed a vote of thanks to the Merseyside Division for their hospitality in Liverpool, and for their admirable organisation of the Conference.

This was carried unanimously.

The Conference closed with a vote of thanks to Mr. Whitworth for taking the Chair, proposed by Mr. Hubert Wood and carried unanimously.

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### CONFERENCE CABARET.

We should again like to refer to the Cabaret show which was given on the Saturday evening following the Conference. Although the Liverpool Playgoers' Club naturally took a prominent part in the entertainment, they were not responsible for it as stated in last month's "Drama."

The Cabaret was arranged by the Merseyside Festival Committee, and was composed of items contributed by various Liverpool amateur Societies. Besides the Liverpool Playgoers' Club, these included Miss Barton's Verse Speaking Choir, Mr. Denis Bickersteth and Friends, the Delta Players, Revillo Comedy Company, Sandon Studios, the Unity Players and the Wallacey Playgoers' Club.

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### A USEFUL FESTIVAL GADGET.

Messrs. A. Arnold & Co., of 122, St. John Street, Clearkewell Road, E.C.1. have sent us a catalogue of their stop-watches, and these should be very useful to those whose duty it is to attend to the timing of Festival plays. A normal type of Racing Recorder is sold for 25s. There is also a Chronometer with a centre second hand in addition to hour and minute hands, at 15s, and a wrist stop-watch for the same price. For stage purposes perhaps the most useful in the series is the Appointment Alarm watch at 25s. This watch has an ordinary dial with minute hand, but with the addition of an alarm bell. If the alarm is properly set at the rise of the curtain, the timekeeper or judge can safely forget all about the time-limit until his attention is called by the ringing of the tiny bell. The price of this watch is 25s., and all the models mentioned may be obtained at the stated prices, post free, from the address given above.

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### DRAMA LEAGUE RESTAURANT

The Restaurant at 9, Fitzroy Square has been refurnished and the cuisine improved. Catering is now undertaken in connection with the Club Room which may be hired for evening events or private parties. Terms on application.

# RULES OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

*Incorporating the Village Drama Society.*

## I. TITLE OF THE LEAGUE

The name of the League to be "The British Drama League."

## II. OBJECT OF THE LEAGUE

The object of the League as set out in a Trust Deed executed on the 19th day of December, 1934 is as follows:—"The promotion in Great Britain (and throughout the British Empire) of general education in relation to the Art of the Theatre (hereinafter called "the general purpose of the League") and in particular (subject always to the general purpose of the League) *inter alia* to promote a national festival of community drama, to support village drama, to organise drama schools, to organise dramatic competitions, lectures, conferences and exhibitions of theatrical art, to maintain a magazine, to maintain libraries of books and documents relating to drama, to make available to members, either by sale or hire, costumes, books, plays, pamphlets and documents, gramophone records, and other publications relating to the art of the theatre at as low a price, as may be, having regard to the expenses incurred by the League in relation thereto, and to acquire by purchase or to rent suitable premises for the general purpose of the League including therein the provision of meeting places for members."

## III. MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the League shall be open to all persons who are concerned with the general purpose of the League. Membership shall be acquired by the payment of an annual subscription, which payment shall be taken as signifying the subscribers' agreement with the Rules of the League.

## IV. SUBSCRIPTIONS

### (a) BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

The annual subscription shall be £1 is., which shall entitle a Member to the receipt of the League's Monthly Magazine, to a vote at General Meetings, and to the right to form affiliated Groups.

### (b) BY GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Any Organisation of not less than ten persons may become affiliated to the League on payment of an annual subscription of £1 is. As an affiliated Organisation it shall, in the person of its duly nominated representative, acquire and exercise all the privileges afforded by the League. Societies in villages of not more than 4,000 inhabitants may affiliate to the League on the terms of the agreement with the Village Drama Society, which have been deposited in the offices of the League.

The policy and management of an affiliated Organisation shall, subject to these rules, be left entirely in its own hands.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS, whether of individuals or of Organisations shall be payable in advance to the Hon. Treasurer of the League. Subscriptions become due on January 1st or June 30th. Notice of resignation of membership or of affiliation shall be sent to the Secretary in writing one calendar month before the expiration of the subscription, otherwise the membership shall be held to be continued, and the member or Organisation shall be liable to pay the subscription for the following twelve months.

## V. HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

Persons who have rendered conspicuous service to the Art of the Theatre may be elected Honorary Members by a vote of the Council.

## VI. CANCELLATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Any member or Organisation whose conduct shall be deemed by the Council to be opposed to the interests of the League may be struck off the List of Members, upon which the subscription for the year shall be returned. But any member, or

Organisation shall have the right to appeal against such a decision to the next General Meeting of the League, on the requisition, to be made within a month of the decision, in the case of members, of at least ten fellow-members; or, in the case of an Organisation on the requisition of the Secretaries of at least five other affiliated organisations. Pending the next General Meeting, the membership in question shall be held to be in suspense.

## VII. GOVERNMENT OF THE LEAGUE

(a) The government and funds of the League shall be administered by the Council in accordance with the provisions of the Trust Deed, always providing that the League may not make any dividend, gift, division, or bonus in money to or between any of its members. The Council shall consist of not more than 47 members of the League, and shall consist of the 4 Trustees for the time being, not more than 10 annually co-opted members, one of whom shall be a representative of the Empire over-seas, and 33 members elected annually. Of these elected members 15 shall be termed National members, and shall be elected annually by postal ballot throughout the entire membership. 18 shall be termed Regional members, and shall be elected annually on the basis hereinafter to be described.

(b) *Election of 15 National Members.* All nominations for the election of National members on the Council shall be sent in writing signed by two members of the League as proposer and seconder and accompanied by a guarantee from the proposer that the consent of the candidate to serve as a member of the Council if elected has been obtained. Nominations must be sent to the Secretary on or before May 15th in each year.

(c) *Election of 18 Regional Members.* For purposes of this election, and for such other purposes as may be defined from time to time by the Council, in each administrative county area in England with the exception of London, a meeting of two representatives from each affiliated organisation and of each individual member within that county, shall be called each year not later than the 1st day of May, each individual member and each affiliated organisation having one vote. At this meeting a county representative of the League shall be elected from any names duly nominated which have been sent in at least a fortnight before the date of the meeting, postal voting to the meeting being permitted. The 42 members so elected shall be grouped in three English Areas to be formed from time to time by the Council, and shall thus constitute three Area Committees whose duties shall be defined from time to time by the Council. A meeting of each Area Committee thus formed shall be held annually not later than the first day in June and shall have the right to co-opt other members, who shall be either individual members of the League or members of an affiliated organisation, to assist them in promoting the work of the League in that Area. From the Committee thus elected and co-opted it shall be the duty of the elected members to select 4 representatives to serve on the Council of the League, making 12 members in all. 2 representatives from Scotland, 2 from Wales and 2 from London shall likewise be elected to the Council by such methods as from time to time it may determine.

(d) The President and Vice-Presidents shall be elected by the Council and shall hold office for one year, and shall be eligible for re-election.

(e) The Council shall also elect from their own number a Chairman and an Hon. Treasurer, who shall hold office for one year and be eligible for re-election; and appoint a Director and/or Secretary (Honorary or otherwise) who may or may not be one of their own number.

(f) The Council may appoint committees or sub-committees for special objects from their own body, with or without the addition of others, and shall define their duties and powers—the Chairman of the Council, Hon. Treasurer and the Secretary (Honorary or otherwise) to be an ex-officio member of any such committee.

(g) The Council shall be empowered to make by-laws, but such by-laws must be ratified at the next ensuing General Meeting of the League, for incorporation in the Rules of the League, if approved.

(h) The Council shall meet at least three times in each year, and on other occasions when summoned by the Secretary. Six members of the Council shall form a

quorum. The Secretary shall give to each member seven days' notice of meeting and the nature of the business to be discussed, but the accidental omission to give such notice, or the non-receipt of such notice, shall not invalidate the proceedings of the Council.

(i) The Council shall have power to appoint such paid officers as it thinks fit.

#### VIII. GENERAL MEETINGS.

(a) There shall be an Annual General Meeting of the League held in London on a date before the last day of November in each year, to be fixed by the Council, for the purposes of:

(1) Receiving the Report of the Council.

(2) Receiving the Statement of Accounts.

(3) Electing Auditors.

(4) Considering and, if necessary, taking action with reference to any business or motion of which due notice has been given.

Any member desirous to bring forward any business at such meeting shall give notice thereof to the Council on or before the first day of June.

(b) Not less than fourteen days' notice of every General Meeting, specifying the place, the day, and the hour of the meeting, and in the case of special business the general nature of the business to be transacted thereat, shall be given to each affiliated Society and member at his last known address in the United Kingdom, in such form and manner as the Council may from time to time prescribe, but the accidental omission to give such notice to, or the non-receipt of such notice by, any member shall not invalidate the proceedings of any General Meeting.

(c) The Council of the League shall, by a vote of the majority of their full number, or on receipt of a requisition signed by at least fifteen members, direct the Secretary to convene a Special General Meeting of the members for the consideration of any urgent matter, and the resolutions adopted at such meetings shall have the same force as if adopted at the Annual General Meeting.

(d) Every General Meeting of the League shall be presided over by the President, or in his absence by one of the Vice-Presidents to be elected by the Council, or in their absence the meeting shall elect its own chairman. The chairman presiding at any meeting shall have an original and also a casting vote.

(e) The decision of a majority of the members present at a General Meeting and actually voting shall be decisive. The vote shall be taken by ballot if demanded by a majority of those present. Ten members personally present shall form a quorum. No alteration of these rules shall be made except at a General Meeting, and no rule shall be proposed for adoption at a General Meeting which is inconsistent with the General Purpose of the League.

#### IX. ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Each year the Council shall summon a Conference to consist of two delegates from each affiliated organisation. It shall also be open to individual members. It shall be held in some convenient place which shall be decided upon if possible at the previous Conference. Affiliated organisations and individual members shall be entitled, upon giving one month's notice in writing to the Secretary of the League, to bring before the Conference any questions affecting the League's development and the drama in general for the purpose of moving resolutions upon them.

The Chairman of the Conference, who shall have been appointed beforehand by the Council, may in his discretion admit other matters to the Agenda. Each organisation and individual present may cast one vote. The resolutions of the Conference shall be considered forthwith by the Council, and failing adoption, they shall be referred to the next Annual General Meeting.

#### X. DISSOLUTION OF THE LEAGUE.

The League shall not be dissolved without the assent of a majority of two-thirds of the members present at a General Meeting, and at least sixty days' notice shall be given to the members of any proposal to dissolve the League.



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